

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архиепархія Вінніпеґу

Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic

Directive # 4

(4 April 2020)

Prot. H/20/2020

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

**To the Reverend Clergy, Religious Sisters and Laity
of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg:**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues its spread across Manitoba, our lives continue to be affected in its path. This requires ongoing directives to you concerning our faith lives and church practices. This Archeparchy Directive # 4, follows upon the ZOOM clergy conference held 3 April. This Archeparchy **Directive # 4 updates and replaces** the previous directives.

GENERAL NORMS

- 1) We are to follow the regulations and directives of the pertinent civil authorities, public health officer and other medical officials given for the common good of society. Our directives are issued especially with due concern for the health and well-being of our clergy and faithful.
- 2) Particular care is to be given in keeping all spaces and objects clean and sanitized.
- 3) Special attention is to be placed on avoiding physical contact with other persons, maintaining physical distancing (at least two meters), avoiding coughing, sneezing, speaking close to, and breathing upon other persons. These precautions are to be maintained in church locations as well.
- 4) The current civil directives for the Province of Manitoba restrict all gatherings to less than 10 persons. This number may be further restricted.

LITURGICAL SERVICES

- 5) Following upon the civil restriction concerning the gatherings of persons, Sunday and Feast Day Divine Liturgies, and all other liturgical services are hereby **closed to the public**. This applies to social events and meetings as well. Parish priests are to celebrate these liturgies for the given intentions, especially for the parish, the sick and deceased. The faithful are dispensed from the canonical obligation to attend Sunday and Feast Day Liturgies. In parish districts this may be done by the pastor at the central church.

- 6) Parishes should use electronic means to transmit liturgical services, including “*live stream*”, and other uses of the internet. Prerecorded services, homilies, catechesis and other similar presentations can be made available via “*You Tube*” or other social media platforms. Parishes should also investigate use of local radio and tv stations for broadcasting possibilities. Information regarding available programming via the internet, especially from within the Archeparchy of Winnipeg will be provided on our website. Liturgies are also transmitted from Ukraine. In Canada a daily Roman Catholic Mass is offered on Canadian TV networks.
- 7) Participation for the closed liturgical church services is restricted to **two clergyman** and **two laity** providing assistance, for a maximum of 4 persons. They must follow physical distancing requirements.
- 8) **Liturgical Services of Holy Week**, where possible, are to be celebrated. However, due to the present limitations it is possible for clergy to celebrate only portions of these services electronically, transmitting the key liturgical texts and offering a spiritual reflection on the theme of the service.
- 9) There will be **NO** physical blessing of pussy willows for Palm Sunday or Easter baskets inside or outside the church. Blessing of Willows and Easter Baskets can only be done via the live-streamed liturgies, where with the intention of the celebrant, the blessing applies to these items in homes or where ever the faithful have them. The prayer of blessing is the key element in these sacramental rituals, even without the use of holy water. The faithful who have holy water in their homes may sprinkle it on these items having participated in the prayer via internet or even saying the prayer together as a family.
- 10) There will be **NO** public veneration of the Plaschanytsia or Burial Shroud, even on an individual basis.
- 11) Resurrection Matins are to take place within the church, using the royal doors of the iconostasis in place of the church doors for the opening rituals.
- 12) **Sacrament of Reconciliation / Confession** will continue to be made available to the faithful, but on an individual basis. Pastors should indicate to parishioners when and where they are available for Confessions. A distance of 2 meters must be maintained between priest and penitent.

In spite of their sincere desire to avail themselves of one of the limited opportunities to Confess their sins at this confusing time of crisis, if the faithful are unable to do so, they should also be reminded of the concept of a **Perfect Act of Contrition**. This, of course, refers to the situation when “a penitent sincerely regrets his/her sins, not out of fear of God’s just punishment, but because of having offended our Loving Lord. Such a sincere ‘perfect act of contrition’ can permit a person to receive Holy Communion – under the condition that the person sincerely desires to amend

his/her life and at the first available opportunity the person must make a proper Sacramental Confession".¹

- 13) Reception of Holy Communion** is especially important during the Easter season. As with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, parish priests should provide opportunity for the faithful to receive Holy Communion on an individual basis, informing them when this will be possible in the church or another suitable location (e.g. church hall), again maintaining the required limits on gatherings of people. If we are unable to receive the Holy Eucharist in the form of consecrated bread and wine, we can make a **Spiritual Communion**, a practice our faithful carried out in Ukraine during the Communist era. For Spiritual Communion we unite ourselves in prayer with the Lord, especially during the live transmission of the Divine Liturgy, we express sorrow for our sins, pray the communion prayers, and ask the Eucharist Lord to come into our hearts. Pope Saint John Paul II wrote: "it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of 'spiritual communion'" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 34).
- 14) Funerals** may be conducted in churches and funeral homes in consultation with funeral home officials. Gathering restrictions and physical distancing must be followed. Some families may request immediate burial with a Panaxyda and interment rites at the gravesite. At this time, unless a Divine Liturgy is deemed essential, the funeral service should consist of the Parastas and/or Panaxyda. A memorial liturgy can be planned for a later date. Public receptions following a funeral are not to take place, especially on church property.
- 15) Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins** continues but within the health directives of hospitals, health care facilities and private homes. While providing spiritual support to those in need, clergy are to avoid situations where they too can become carriers of the virus and thus endanger others. Precautions are to be taken when administering the Sacramental Mysteries of Holy Communion, Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. Health restrictions may not permit the physical anointing, in which case as much of the prayer as possible should be prayed. Be prepared to leave the oil swabs and texts you use in in the restricted area for disposal if so required.
- 16) Marriages/ Crowning**, where possible, should be postponed to a later date. If taking place during the pandemic, gathering restrictions must be followed, with the essential participation of the couple, the priest and a witness. Those who are at risk should not attend. Public receptions following a marriage are not to take place, especially on church property.

¹ Cf. [Letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav with Recommendations as to how to serve the Holy Week and Easter Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) (24 March 2020), n. 7

17) **Baptism and Chrismation / Rites of Initiation** where possible, should be postponed to a later date. If taking place during the pandemic, participation is restricted to the parents and sponsors, according to the gathering restrictions. Those who are at risk should not attend. For the prayers of exorcism, the priest is not to breath over the candidate. This can be replaced by the waving of the hand over the candidate.

18) **Distribution of Holy Communion**

- i- The priest must wash his hands thoroughly before beginning the preparation of the Gifts at the Proskomide (Prothesis). He also should sanitize his hands before the fraction of the Eucharistic Bread during the Divine Liturgy (“Holy Things for the Holy”).
- ii- Rather than drinking from the chalice, clergy are to “Intinct” the Eucharistic Bread into the chalice. A second chalice can be used for distribution of the Holy Eucharist to the faithful.
- iii- All clergy are to refrain from saying the reception formula aloud when distributing the Holy Eucharist to the faithful, to avoid breathing or spraying saliva onto the face of the recipient.
- iv- Use of wooden single-use utensils (e.g. wands, flat sticks] are permitted for the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful. Such wooden utensils are to be used one per person, and then cleansed after the Liturgy like the communion spoon. These wooden utensils are to be burnt within a week after usage.
- v- If the church is to be open for individual visits by the faithful at prearranged times, the clergy may distribute Holy Communion to the faithful, following the above norms.
- vi- Distribution of the Holy Eucharist to the sick and shut-ins can be done with wooden utensils, following the norms given above. Washing hands before and after each visit is a high priority.

19) **Sanitary Norms**

- i- Clergy and others assisting around the altar must wash their hands thoroughly before and after ever liturgical service.
- ii- Clergy and laity must refrain from shaking hands and any other forms of body contact within the church. Keeping a distance between persons is also important.
- iii- Holy Water containers are to be emptied and covered, including those at church entrances.

- iv- Veneration of icons, the gospel book, crosses and crucifixes, reliquaries and any other church items by kissing, touching or any other means is to be halted.
- v- Chalices, other sacred vessels, hand crosses, gospel books and similar items are to be washed with sanitizers or warm soapy water. Purificators, towels and other linen are to be replaced with fresh ones after each liturgy.
- vi- All books and other movable items should be taken from church seating and stored until further notice.
- vii- Door handles, bannisters, pew tops, counters and other areas frequently touched inside and outside churches are to be sanitized. Washrooms especially are to be kept sanitized.



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